Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Prof. Bimal Krishna Motilal in his book *The Word and The World* opines that if philosophy is an attempt to understand the world around us and if it is in terms of our language that we apprehend the world, then an understanding of how our language works would be almost the first step in studying philosophy.[1] But human language is a very complex phenomenon. Thinking is impossible without language. Hence by analysing language we can analyse our thought that are communicable by means of language. We use language to communicate thought because we have an implicit understanding of how our language works. This illustrates the importance of the philosophy of language.

Philosophy of language is concerned with philosophical questions about language. Traditionally, it includes, but it is far from exhausted by, the following questions: What, if anything, is meaning? Are there meaning? What is it for something to be meaningful? What is it something to mean such and such? What sort of attribute is the ability to speak a language? How does one learn to acquire it? What is conventionality? What is the relation between meaning and reference? How does one manage to use words, with pre-established meanings to refer to talk about particular thing?

These problems have come to be part of philosophy of language by a variety of routes, for example, question about language acquisition are clearly part of philosophy of language for historical reasons. Both Locke and Leibnitz provided lengthy and detailed treatments of language acquisition as an integral part of their treatments of other general philosophical problems. Since then, theories of language acquisition of more or less substance having important part of the works

of many philosophers down to and including Russell and Quine and so on.

As one would expect, linguists and psychologists have also been quite interested in question about how we come to speak a language. Given the *apriori* nature of philosophical work one might expect that the sorts of questions philosophers asks about language acquisition are radically different from those posed by linguists and psychologists. Answers to questions, as it turns out, in linguistics can have a profound effect on this area of philosophy of language, and through that on a variety of other philosophical problem that philosophers have connected with it.

In contrasts, the question, "Are there meanings, and if so, what are they?" would seem a prime candidate for purely philosophical treatment if anything were. It is surely a part of philosophy of language for more than historical reasons. But it has become clear that this is a question which cannot be answered without studying the technical apparatus available to linguists who study semantics and without studying the relation between that apparatus and what may be said in natural language.

Linguistics, in contrast to philosophy of language, is generally explained as scientific study of language. It is traditionally concerned with writing grammars and dictionaries for natural language, and with describing phonetic system.

There are of course, difficulty to draw a distinction between linguistic and philosophy of language. One such difficulty with the distinction is that it is far from clear which questions are generally about language and which are not. Formally, most if not all can be viewed the distinction between linguistic philosophy and philosophy of language is

that there are a number of traditional areas of philosophy of language which can only be treated satisfactorily by considering other areas of philosophy. When working in the areas it is difficult to say whether one is working on problems about language or not communicate thoughts because we have an implicit understanding of how our language works.

Any language is composed of words, which are combined to form sentences. But what is a word? A great deal of time could be spent in discussing competing definition. But for our present purpose, it will be sufficient to suggest that a word is the smallest unit of meaning. But what is meaning? Quine in his "Two Dogmas Of Empiricism" opine that the term meaning was not clear to us. Thus we come to face the problem of the relation between word and the thing that it stands for. Raising battles are still being fought over the issue what is the relation between a word and what it means. As a result we now have quite a few theories of meaning.

The main problems centering round the concept of meaning are: what does it take for a word or a sentence to mean what it means? How do we understand what others mean when they make use of words, phrases, or sentences? How do children learn meanings of words? How is the meaning of one term interrelated with meaning of others terms within a language? How do we correctly decide what the meaning of any particular word is? Do proper names have meaning? These questions have puzzled philosophers over the years and a whole tradition of philosophical thought has evolved as philosophers have tried to grapple with these questions.

We have seen that a sentence consists of words. Among these words most of the words those occupy the subject place of a sentence are names. But what is a name? Again this is a contentious issue in philosophy. Some philosophers, e.g. Hobbes, supposed, "names are

signs not of thing, but of our cognitions". Words are not the only things that can be sings; for instance a heavy cloud can be a sign of rain. This means that from the cloud we can infer rain. This is an example of a natural sign. This natural signs are to be distinguished from language proper, which consists of sound, marks, and other such significations. Animal noises come about by necessity, not by decision, as human speech does. That is why, on Hobbes's view animal though capable of imagery, and cannot reason; for reasoning presupposes words with meaning fixed by decision.

Philosophers have the tendency to suppose that every word in a sentence name something. That is why they look for the referent of the name. But when they think in this way it is like searching for essence of the reference. They forget that the word reference has variety of uses. Early Wittgenstein did not realise this though later Wittgenstein by rejecting the notion of essence could apprehend this point.

Among the various names that a sentence contains only some are proper names. The status of proper name was a contentious issue in philosophy since the days of Plato. The question that is raised about proper name are those if they refer how do they refer? Do they refer at all? And so on. There seems to be no doubt that adjectives and common nouns like red and table have sense or meaning, and the sense seems to hold fairly obviously for so-called definite descriptions like the 'the red flower' or 'the man next to the table'. But what about proper names like 'Winston Churchill' and 'San Francisco'? Do they have sense in the same way that adjectives, common noun and definite descriptions have sense? In the history of philosophy, answers to these questions have been crucial to answering the general question of how words relate to the world.

According to one widely held view, proper names simply stand for object, without having any sense or meaning other than standing for objects. An early formulation of the germ of this theory is found in Plato's *Theaetetus*, and the most sophisticated modern version of the view are found in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Pilosophicus*, and Russell's *Philosophy of Logical Atomism.* According to Wittgenstein the meaning of a proper name is simply the object for which it stands. Perhaps the most famous formulation of this no-sense theory of proper name is Mill's statement that proper names have denotation but not connotation. For Mill, a common noun like horse has both a connotation and a denotation— it connotes those properties, which would be specified in the definition of 'horse', and it denotes all horses. But a proper name only denotes its bearer.

The above one is a famous and attractive theory of name, but there are certain notorious difficulties with it. Frege pointed out such a difficulty. Sometimes one sees proper name in identity statement, statements of the form "A is identical with B". Frege pointed out that if proper name simply stands for objects and nothing more, how could such statements ever convey any factual information? If we construe such statement as solely about the referent of the name, than it seems they must be trivial, since, if true, they say only that an object is identical with itself. If on the other hand, we construe such statements as given information about the name, then it seems they must be arbitrary, since we can assign any name, we wish to object.

Frege's solution was that besides the names and objects they refer to, we must distinguish a third element, the sense of the name in virtue of which and only in virtue with it refers to the object. In the statement "The evening star is identical with the morning star", the expression "the evening star" and "the morning star" have the same reference but different senses. The sense provides the mode of

presentation of the object. The object is, as it were illuminated from one side at the sense of the expressions. It is because the two expressions have different senses that the statements convey factual information to us. What the statement conveys is that one and the same object has the two different set of properties specified by the two names. Thus such a statement can be a statement of fact and not a mere triviality. All proper names, for Frege, had senses in the way that the expressions "the evening star" and "the morning star" have senses. Later on we shall see that he used proper name in a broad sense.

The above one presents a completely different picture of proper name from the classical no sense theory. According to the classical theory, names, if they are really names, necessarily have a reference and no sense at all. According to the Fregean theory, they essentially have sense and contingently have a reference. They refer if and only if there is an object that satisfied their sense. In the first theory of proper name they are the special connecting links between words and world. In the second theory proper names are only a species of disguised definite descriptions — everyone is equivalent in meaning to a definite description that definite description which gives an explicit formulation of its sense. According to the first theory, name is prior to describing. According to the second describing is prior to naming, for a name only names by describing the objects its names.

Common sense seems to incline us toward the no-sense theory, at least as far as most ordinary proper names are concerned. Proper names are not equivalent to definite descriptions. Calling an object by its name is not a way of describing it. Naming is a preparation for describing, not a kind of describing. We do not have definitions of most proper names. Dictionary entries for proper name usually offer contingent fact describing the object referred to by the name. These descriptions are not definitional equivalence of the name for they're only

contingently true of the bearer. But the name is not "true of" the bearer at all. It is its name.

Not only do we not have definitional equivalent for proper name but also it is not at all clear how we could go about getting definitions of proper name if we wanted to. If, for example, we try to present a complete description of the object as the sense of the name, added consequences would follow. For example, any true statement about the object that used the name as subject would be analytic, and any false one would be self-contradictory. Moreover, the meaning of the name would change every time there was a change in the object, and the same name would have different meanings for different users of the name.

Such commonsense considerations weigh heavily in favour of the no-sense theory, yet it too encounters serious difficulties. First, it cannot account for the occurrence of proper name in informative identity statements. Second, it is similarly unable to account for the occurrence of proper names in existential statements. For example, in such statements as "There is such a place as Africa' and "Cerberus does not exist", the proper names cannot be said to refer, for no subject of an existential statement can refer. If it did, the pre-condition of its having a truth-value would guarantee its truth if it were in the affirmative and its falsity if it were in the negative. An affirmative existential statement does not refer to an object and states that it exists. Rather it expresses a concept and states that that concept is instantiated.

Thus if a proper name occurs in an existential statements it seems that it must have some conceptual or descriptive content. But if it has a descriptive content, than it seems Frege's theory must be correct, for what could the descriptive content be except the sense of the proper

name? The occurrence of proper names in existential statements posses another great difficulty for the no-sense theorists.

Another difficulty of the no sense theory is this. What account can the no sense theorists give of the existence of the object referred to by a proper name? If one agrees with the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* that the meaning of a proper name is literally the object for which it stands than it seems that the existence of those objects which are named by genuine proper names cannot be an ordinary contingent fact. The reason for this is that such changes in the world as the destruction of some object cannot destroy the meaning of the word, because any change in the world must stills be describable in words.

About Singular terms

In English or any other natural language, the paradigmatic referring devices are *singular terms,* expressions which purport to denote or designate particular individual people, places, or other objects. Usually singular terms are contrasted with *general terms* such as "dog" or "brown" that can be applied to more than one thing. Singular terms include proper names (such as "Mahatma Gandhi", "Winston Churchill", "Kolkata", "3:15 PM", etc.), definite descriptions (such as "The Prime minister of India", "The Cat on the Mat", "The last departmental meeting ", etc.), singular personal pronouns (such as "You", "She", etc.), demonstrative pronouns (such as "this", "that",), and a few others. Almost all of these singular terms were the topic of philosophical discussion in the last century. This is not to say that the issue was not existent before last century. Actually philosophers right from the time of Plato try to address this problem. However, what we want to trace here is that various singular terms occupied the centre stage of discussion from the beginning of last century. For example, we find that Bertrand Russell is dealing with the problem of definite descriptions in his various

books. His effort to solve this problem is popularly known as the theory of descriptions. It is thought that it is by virtue of this theory that Russell ushered in the philosophy of language in the philosophical arena.

A closer scrutiny of all those that are included in singular terms reveal that the crux of the issue is what are the meaning of these terms. How, for example, does it come about that "Winston Churchill" means precisely what it does? How is it possible for those intrinsically inert ink-marks (or some associated stage of the brain) to reach out into the world and catch on to a definite portion of reality? Again, the way proper name behaves, definite descriptions does not seem to behave in the same way. The case is same with demonstrative and indexical terms. This issue, which might perhaps strike some as small and arcane, is on the contrary one of the most urgent of philosophical question.

Philosophers have propounded various theories in order to address the above problem, e.g., referential theory of meaning (i.e., it is the referent of the word that is meant by that word), ideational theory of meaning, and so on. But what is the problem is that all these theories can only explain or fit certain cases of events and unable to explain the remaining one. It is exactly due to this that an acceptable solution remained elusive uptill now.

The issue of proper name, definite descriptions, demonstrative and indexical each separately has vast literature. That is why it is not possible to discuss all these issues within the ambit of one thesis. That is why I have chosen only the issue of proper names. However, while discussing the issue of proper names other issues such as definite descriptions, etc. are bound to come, as these topics are interrelated. Whenever other related issues come up for discussion it will be due to making clear our main issue, i.e., proper names. In order to limit our discussion we shall ignore all those philosophers of ancient and

medieval time who gave their considered opinion on this issue. In most of the books we find that whenever there is any discussion on proper names of modern times authors usually start with J.S. Mill. However, I have come across some important reflections on this issue in Jermy Bentham's writings. We should not forget that J.S. Mill right from his childhood was a disciple of Bentham. Hence to my mind in order to understand Mill's theory of proper names we have to grasp Bentham's view first.

Development of the theory of reference

Several versions of the theory of reference were partly developed by several contemporary philosophers of semantics, most notably by J.S. Mill, Bretrand Russell, Keith Donnellan, David Kaplan, Saul Kripke, and Hillery Putnam. Russell's and Donnellan's early pioneering efforts were considered mainly with a common use of definite descriptions, the so-called referential use. They later paid attention to proper names and natural kind terms such as "water" and "tiger". Kaplan has begun to develop a theory of so-called indexical expressions, i.e., certain context sensitive expressions such as "I", "here", and "this". Putnam has made an effort to construct a theory of natural kind terms and physical magnitude term, e.g., "energy", which extends to artifact terms, e.g., "pencil". Kripke has formulated a widely discussed account of proper names, and he also extends his account to natural kind term and terms for natural phenomena, e.g., "heat". Inspite of differences in scope and emphasis, these several theories bears striking similarity to one another, enough so that a sort of composite theory has been discussed as the "new" or "causal" theory of reference. To put it simply, this theory asserts that the referential expressions mentioned above are non-connotative appellations, and not disguised or abbreviated descriptions which achieve reference through the mediation of Freagean sense.

Since this theory asserts that certain expressions referred directly, this theory is called the theory of direct reference.

Kripke's paper on the subject has attracted the most attention. In the formulation of his theory of reference, Kripke puts forth a number of important and existing views, and supports them with artful very tricky and cogent argument. Fascinating issues that are related, often in an obvious way, to the theory of direct reference are raised throughout his discussions. From a relatively simple based --- the assertion that proper names are non-connotative appellations --- Kripke launches into issues concerning the reference of proper names in modal and epistemic context, the possibility of contingent *a-priori* truth and necessary *a-posteriori* truth, *de dicto* and *de-ree* modality, essentialism, and some other issue. Thus, although many of the issues, raised by Kripke involve concepts, familiar to philosophical semantics. Much of his discussion touches on issues that seem to belong more to metaphysics than to the philosophy of language. In our discussion we shall also try to have a cursory look into the metaphysical issues.

That Kripke is able to bring a relatively simple theory about the reference of proper names to bear on classical metaphysical problem is a testimony of the power of the theory. But the path from the philosophy of language to metaphysics is a slippery one. It is often difficult to tell whether one of the views being put forth is a straight forward consequence of Kripke's theory of reference, whether it is related to the theory of reference in some less direct way, or whether it is entirely and simply independent of the theory of reference. Sorting out this matter is a delicate task. It is often difficult to determine when an argument depends on and has obvious connection between related theses, and when it uses a non-trivial suppressed premise connecting what are infact unrelated and independent thesis.

The need to clarify the consequences of the theory of direct reference is especially pressing with regard to Kripke's espousal of essentialism (the doctrine that certain properties of things are properties that these things could not fail to have, accept by not existing).Kripke's essentialism, as we shall show later, seems to go hand in hand with his theory of reference.

It is indeed surprising, at least in first thought, that a simple theory about a very basic aspect of language could have this much metaphysical import. A proper theory of reference, usually we think, should be concern only with the nature of the semantical relations that hold between certain linguistic expressions and the objects for which they stand. It should be indifferent to the question of whether the objects referred to have certain of their properties essentially. However, it is worth investigating the extent to which essentialism is indeed a consequence of the theory of direct reference.

In the broadest sense of the term "name", names divide into two classes --- proper names and common names, these being species of singular and general terms respectively. Proper names are names of individuals, such as "New Delhi", "Napoleon", whereas common names are names of kinds of individuals, such as "city", "planet", and "man". Not all singular terms are proper names like indexical terms, definite descriptions. Again not all general term are common name; for instance, adjectival or charactersing general term are common name; for instance, for adjectival or charactersing general term like "red" are not, nor are abstract nouns like "redness" and "bravery". Recently philosophical debate has focused on proper names much more than on common names (apart from the special case of natural kind terms).

About the theory of reference we usually get two views. One is known as the orthodox theory and another is theory of direct reference.

The theory of direct reference takes as its point of departure a rejection of the orthodox, Freagean philosophy of semantics, urging a return to the naïve view held by Mill, and to some extent by Russell, that certain expressions, in particular proper names, are non-connotative appellations. The contrast between the orthodox theory and the theory of direct reference is clearest in the case of purported denoting expressions or singular terms.

On the orthodox theory, received from Frege, as we have seen, every singular term has in addition to its denotation, or the object denoted by the term, a sense, which is the manner in which the term presented its denotation to the listener or reader. Pairs of co-referential terms (i.e., terms having the same denotation) may present their denotation in different ways. Thus, for instance, the terms "the author of Gitanjali" and "the founder of Santiniketan" have the same denotation, Rabindranath Tagore, but differ in sense. The sense of a term provides a criterion for identifying the referent of the term, thereby determining who or what the referent of the term is to be. The *sense* of a singular term is something which a speaker mentally grasps or apprehends and which forms a part of any belief (or assertion, thought, hope) whose expression involves the term. The sense of a term is a concept, whereas the denotation or referent of a term is whoever or whatever uniquely fits the concept.

On the orthodox theory, all singular terms are assimilated to the model of a definite description (in attributive use in Donnellan's terminology).

The sense of the expression is usually thought of as supplying a set of conditions, or properties, and the denotation, in any, is whatever uniquely satisfies those conditions. The sense of an expression is often identified with a conjunction of properties. However, according to certain

refinements, of Frege's account, such as Searle's, an expression denotes whatever object best fits the conceptual representation contained in the sense. On this modified Freagean account, the sense of an expression is identified with "cluster of" properties, rather than a conjunction. Other refinements have been proposed, as for instance in Linsky, but each of these rival theories does little more than add fringes to the Freges original scheme. The general picture of descriptive denotation modified by a concept consisting of properties remains essentially unchanged. The term expresses a concept, and the concept in terms determines an object, viz., whatever objects uniquely fit, or best fits, the concept. The denoting relation is thus an indirect relation between a term and an object.

Reference

1. Lal, B.K., *The Word And The World,* Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, p.3.